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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN: PRESIDENT ALIYEV REASONABLE ON N-K
OPTIONS, STILL FURIOUS WITH TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador Anne Derse, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: EUR DAS Matthew Brzya and Ambassador Derse met with President Aliyev and FonMin Mammadyarov for over an hour on April 3 to discuss Azerbaijan's concern with respect to the impact of the Turkey-Armenia normalization process on the negotiations to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (NK). Aliyev hid none of his outrage at Turkey's apparent disregard for Azerbaijan's interests, and the intensity of his display seemed calculated to underscore the seriousness of the repercussions for Turkey if Azerbaijan's interests in NK are sacrificed for the sake of the Armenian accord. Nevertheless, when presented with a reasonable formula for ensuring progress on NK concurrently with the normalization process, he agreed readily to cooperate. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Bryza told Aliyev that Secretary Clinton had sent him to Baku because the USG understands that Azerbaijan is concerned that Turkey-Armenia normalization may make the Armenians less constructive on NK. He asked Aliyev if Azerbaijan would be more comfortable with the Turkey-Armenia process if we could achieve a breakthrough on NK. He underscored the Secretary's personal commitment to work to this end, and President Obama's interest in meeting with Aliyev in Istanbul at April 6-7.

Resentment at Ankara's Betrayal...

¶3. (S/NF) Aliyev responded with a lengthy and bitter indictment of Turkey as a "liar, cheat and betrayer" of Azerbaijan. Noting that the consequences of the current volatile situation in the region are unpredictable, he complained that Azerbaijan had quietly supported the recent improvement in Turkish-Armenian relations, including President Sargsian's "football diplomacy," never dreaming that Turkey "would cheat us" by delinking progress on NK from that process. President Gul had promised that there would be no doors or borders opened for Armenia without progress on NK, Aliyev asserted. "He lied, I no longer trust him."

¶4. (S/NF) Aliyev noted that when he met PM Erdogan in Davos this January, Erdogan had said nothing about the steps Turkey was contemplating with Armenia. Erdogan was dismissive when Aliyev tried to raise the difficult issue of Turkish transit for Azerbaijani gas. After Davos, Erdogan had sent FonMin Babacan to Baku to explain what was occurring with Armenia with respect to re-establishing relations. "Babacan asked for my support, saying we should try to make progress "in parallel" on NK," but without linkage, Aliyev said incredulously. Aliyev told Babacan Azerbaijan would not

support Turkey's steps with Armenia without progress on NK and outlined "all the possible consequences for Turkey and this region" if Turkey pursued this course. The Turks asked that Aliyev keep the conversation confidential. Aliyev agreed, he said, but shortly thereafter, RFE/RL's Armenian service reported that NK was "no longer an obstacle" to improvement in Turkish-Armenia relations. This had sparked a press campaign in Azerbaijan which continues to this day, Aliyev added.

15. (S/NF) Aliyev said he had twice sent Deputy FonMin Araz Azimov to Turkey to outline for the Turks what they would win and what they would lose from normalization without resolution or progress on NK, and to propose a joint Turkish-Azerbaijani statement on the matter. Azimov returned without results, and Azerbaijan now confronts "the reality" that Turkey will initial, sign and ratify an agreement with Armenia to open the border and establish diplomatic relations.

16. (S/NF) If NK is part of the package, Azerbaijan would positively accept this, Aliyev said. Azerbaijan needs "something substantive," such as agreement on the Basic Principles "as we understand them;" or, a confidence building measure like the liberation of five Azerbaijani territories, which would still leave Kelbajar and Lachin in Armenia's hands as leverage in the NK talks. "If that can happen, it would be a solution," Aliyev said. Simply securing Armenia's agreement on the outstanding issue of the width of the Lachin corridor is not enough, as earlier proposed, would not be enough.

17. (S/NF) Azerbaijan also can no longer maintain its posture of "patient silence" about the Turkish-Armenia process,

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Aliyev said. He noted that given Erdogan's political weakness going into the recent Turkish elections, Azerbaijan had refrained from public statements to avoid impact on the vote. But "silence was a sign of friendship the Turks do not deserve." Turkey is manipulating public opinion, portraying Azerbaijan as acquiescent in its process with Armenia, so Azerbaijan must now clarify, publicly, its position.

18. (S/NF) Turkey is about to commit "a serious historical mistake that will never be forgotten," Aliyev asserted. Our relations will never be the same. We are not one nation and we never will be. Our relations will be damaged, it will be a disaster on all issues, security, economy, energy," Aliyev continued. Turkey has to decide what it will gain and what it will lose. It will lose Azerbaijan, certainly; Central Asia as well, and end Turkic solidarity, he continued. There will be consequences for Georgia if Turkey and Azerbaijan split. Energy negotiations will end. "They did everything to ruin energy cooperation," Aliyev said heatedly. He added later that Turkey underestimates the degree to which Azerbaijan can influence its domestic politics. Azerbaijan has never interfered in Turkish internal politics before, "but this is matter of national concern," he warned.

19. (S/NF) Saying he felt "personally betrayed" by Gul and Erdogan, Aliyev said he saw no sense in going to Istanbul.

...But Moderation on N-K

10. (S/NF) Bryza responded that the Secretary had sent him to Baku because the USG has a deep strategic interest in its relations with Azerbaijan, and in making Azerbaijan comfortable with the Turkish-Armenia normalization process. The Turks know this too; the USG has told them they must deal with Azerbaijan on gas transit. He told Aliyev that the Turks have underscored that they are willing and able to "stop the process" if there is no progress on NK.

11. (S/NF) Underscoring again that "if there is a substantial contribution for us, then border opening would be normal," Aliyev argued again for liberation of five territories as a confidence-building measure while NK talks continue. Bryza explained why this would be a non-starter, and pressed Aliyev to take advantage of the willingness of senior USG leaders to engage to force progress in the ongoing negotiations, by

securing agreement to the four outstanding issues in the Basic Principles including the width of the Lachin corridor.

He said that he understood President Sargsian was now prepared to discuss the corridor, and might agree to define its width using the range of small arms and light weapons.

¶12. (S/NF) Aliyev argued that border opening and establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia without "a resolution or commitment" on NK would be a diplomatic victory for Armenia that would result in a loss of incentive for Armenia to agree on the four points, damaging the NK negotiations. Bryza responded that the Turkey-Armenia process of initialing, signing, ratifying and implementing border opening would take months, that it was possible to get agreement on the four points in that timeframe, and that the Turks had assured the USG that they would stop the process if Armenia is not constructive in the negotiations.

¶13. (S/NF) Bryza proposed to Aliyev that Aliyev and President Sargsian seek to agree during their meeting in Prague or Brussels on May 7 on the first three points, discuss the Lachin Corridor at their meeting in Moscow in June, and perhaps come to closure on all four points at a meeting on the margins of the G-8 summit in July. He asked if that would give Aliyev enough confidence for the Turkey Armenia process to continue. Aliyev replied "in this case, yes, if we agree with Armenia on the four points, Turkey will open the border."

¶14. (S/NF) Bryza asked if he could relay this to the Turks, urging them to manage their process so pressure stays on Armenia as the NK process proceeds in parallel with normalization. Again lambasting Turkish perfidy, Aliyev insisted Bryza tell the Turks that they "should not disconnect" the NK process from their normalization process, and that they should tell Sargsian they had not disconnected the two. Noting that when the Azerbaijanis had asked the Turks point blank whether they had agreed to normalize with Turkey and open the border without progress on NK, the Turks "had not responded," Aliyev exploded "Silence means

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yes...they did it! They will be on the black list always."

¶15. (S/NF) Bryza urged that Aliyev reconsider going to Istanbul; Aliyev, strongly seconded by Mammadyarov, demurred, saying that would convey "silent agreement" to what the Turks are doing.

¶16. (S/NF) Bryza again pressed Aliyev as to whether he was prepared to "do the 3 1 deal" on the timetable Bryza had proposed, with agreement by mid-summer. Aliyev agreed, adding that if the four outstanding issues cannot be agreed, the option of immediately liberating five territories, with Armenia retaining two as leverage in the negotiations, "should be an option." He said he needed to think through whether he would want a "signed" agreement on the four.

¶17. (U) DAS Bryza cleared this cable.

DERSE